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ABSTRACT

This case study of 215 high school students in Columbia Academy, an international school in Kobe, Japan, was conducted from 1980 to 1985 to examine the values students hold in relation to their demographic characteristics. The study, written by a faculty member of this school who also served on the Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees, used a combination of personal field experience, survey questionnaires, observations, interviews, primary historical documents, student publications, school records, and statistical analyses to assess the interwoven complexity and diversity of the multicultural milieu of this school. The first section is a review of the literature on the cultural characteristics of international school students. Issue is taken with the prevailing view that such students are basically alienated. It is suggested, rather, that international schools provide such students with an opportunity to forge a collective identity as world citizens, based on the socialization process at the school. The second section provides preliminary research results for the students at Columbia Academy, based on the Rokeach Value Survey. Resulting findings establish certain descriptive parameters for the international school student. Results show little or no correlation between nationality and basic goals in life, though statistical correlations were found between nationality and religion on questions of equality and responsibility in marriage. The survey showed overall that peer relationships play a more important role in socialization in a multicultural setting than do as nationality. (TE)

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Value Orientation Among International School Students

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The gain from foreign study is more than an additive; it is a transformation. - Alfred North Whitehead

The strength of any school ultimately lies in its students and teachers. What they do in the classroom and in the corridors constitutes the reality of education as an institution which promotes socialization and the acquisition of skills that will productively serve a society. Most debates about education, however, seem to gloss over this basic unit of the educational experience, preferring instead to address 'larger' issues such as equity, finance, and evaluation. This, of course, neglects the fact that these larger issues are themselves very much affected by the quality of encounters present in given schools.

Because of the dearth of published studies on international schools the basic goals of the present research were a) to delineate certain descriptive demographic parameters of students in one international school and b) to examine the values the students hold in relation to their demographic characteristics. The results reported here give background data for an examination of student socialization and behavior. These results and the attendant discussion are in effect a 'working paper,' the intent of which is to provide an introduction to a topic which, though little studied, may hold promise for the illumination of global issues facing national school systems.

Education can be defined as having three components: socialization, preparation for social utility (the development of certain skills), and guidance for individual self-realization. Socialization has at its core certain basic values which can be considered 'paradigms of self'. These are inculcated mainly in two contexts, school and home. They are the basis for a person's actions. Research on the socialization of children has until now been undertaken mainly in national contexts. International schools, on the other hand, provide a unique vantage point from which to view the socialization process as it takes place cross-culturally.

What are the most significant attributes of students in the environment of an international school? How is socialization abroad different from socialization at home? Are the values of students brought up in international settings different from or similar to students in the United States? International schools present a special target population for researchers interested in these questions. Data collected from this setting can also be a useful reference point when applied to multicultural educational environments present in American or other national schools.

The International School

In the entire world, schools catering to an international student population, a population of students who have been displaced because of the mobility of their families, are actually few in number. But their size belies the actual significance of these schools in the education of a transnational elite. International schools, if broadly defined, yield a student population somewhere in the neighborhood of 2-3 million students. With these small numbers, relatively speaking, we might think these schools to be marginal to our understanding of educational phenomena. If we limit our definition even further, eliminating schools that are overwhelmingly of one nationality and concentrating instead on those with a truly international composition, our numbers shrink further.

Yet this small number of students has not been selected at random. They are the children of people who have chosen an international route to career success. Although these schools like to picture themselves as 'community schools,' the fact remains that the student populations of international schools have been preselected through a process which has chosen those who have 'made it' in international life. International schools are expensive, typically averaging more than $5,000 a year in tuition for day students in the better schools (although many companies foot the bill for their employees), yet they are considered the only viable alternative for expatriate parents living overseas who want to keep their children on the same fast track as they themselves have tread.

The transmission and enhancement of a successful life style in the fast lane of modern living calls for special efforts even in national settings. In an international environment the pace, if anything, quickens. To keep up, there is a need for a special institution, an institution which provides an ethos and justification. This ethos is maintained in a setting where diversity is a watchword and flexibility, patience, and empathy keys to success.

International schools are derivative rather than imitative institutions. A blending of American and European curricula with doses of local color in language or cultural studies, students with multiple allegiances (linguistically, nationally, culturally, and other interests), and a faculty/staff with a bewildering variety and experience, are all 'normal' ingredients. These schools rely on original solutions to novel problems with two elements foremost in their design and operation:

a) an institution enabling students to move to another country or back to the home country with relative ease

b) a program designed for admission to colleges in North America (and preferably the best colleges).

The public image of these schools for their constituents is largely tied into how well these two functions are served. For host nationals they are stereotypically associated either with an anarchy of western freedoms or a moneyed elite of a multiplicity of alien backgrounds. But there is a mystique as well, a mystique found in a culture that initiates those in these institutions into the finer details of life 'at the gate,' of life as it is practiced at the meeting point of multinational, multilingual energies and ambitions.

My primary sources of information in this study were a utilization of well-known ethnographic tools. The data which I collected from 1980-1985 can best be described as multi-instrument research. My desire to balance fact with intuitive feeling led to a collection of both quantitative and qualitative materials. Aside from my role as an observer of the whole school, I taught history and social studies, chaired the social studies department, advised the student council, was a fund-raiser for the school's development program (the only faculty member), taught English to adults in the CA Night School, coordinated outdoor recreation for the CA Summer School, was a member and secretary of the Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees, and led three groups of people associated with the school on extended trips in mainland China. Some duties and activities spanned both elementary and secondary schools: coaching intramural sports, conducting field trips, giving inservice workshops on social studies.

The study was conceived within the larger social context CA is located in, the immediate present of Japan and the post-graduation goal for most students of a university education. An important question concerns post-graduation: what are student goals and the available means to achieve them? For most families there is an impressive committment to higher education. The analysis of this and other questions logically fell into five conceptual categories: history, space and time, social ecology, organization (both formal and informal), student behavior and student values, and administration, finance and politics. Through clarification of conceptual and demographic issues the present paper, as a 'working' document, sets the stage for a later, expanded discussion.

This research on the international school is ultimately meant to explore the details of life in an international school and the possible lessons that could be applied to other educational settings. After a review of basic concepts and existing research, the study has been set in a 'problems framework' (I am indebted to Professor Harumi Befu of Stanford University, who first suggested this approach to me.), a case study ethnography of one international school located in Japan.

As an integrated research review, the results, as partly presented here through the medium of standardized instrument results such as the Rokeach Value Survey, represent a glimpse of a special mosaic, a multicultural milieu. An extended field experience on the inside, survey questionnaires, observations, interviews, primary historical documents, student publications, school records, and statistical analyses have given the study an added impetus that truly reflects the adage that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The international school, if Columbia Academy is representative of such institutions (and there seems to be no reason why it should not be seen so), presents us with an interwoven complexity and diversity that has fascinating implications for cross-cultural communication and national conciousness.

International School Students

There is no doubt that where someone goes to school affects both them as individuals and society in general. The societies of the U.S., the U.K., Japan, and countless other countries (even the U.S.S.R.) have traditionally been rather similar in this respect. In almost all countries we can see by school attendance where class and hierarchy exist and how who stays on top and who stays at the bottom is determined. What is particularly interesting about international schools is that they offer an example of an organization that is at once an elite institution and at the same time a community school. Although the selection process is usually fairly open for expatriates, the fact that people are in a foreign setting at all indicates that a pre-sorting of some kind has taken place. What are the characteristics of this population, and, more importantly for this study, what sorts of students end up in these schools?

In many ways, the experiences of these students anticipate the world of the future, a world of high-speed, multiple encounters and diverse circumstances. If for this reason alone, a study of their experiences is appropriate. As Cookson and Persell (1985, p. 20) have remarked, "Too often in the study of schools there is a kind of scholarly lip service paid to socialization without demonstrating its processes, without evaluating its manifest and latent effects, or without acknowledging that most socialization creates intended and unintended consequences."

Socialization for achievement is a major objective of international schools and the communities which form them. As a primary and accessible vehicle of this socialization, the international school presents us with a complex network that in fact socializes all who encounter it - not only students, but teachers, administrators and parents.

Students in international/overseas schools have usually been classified according to nationality, which as we shall see later is a far too simplistic descriptor. Following studies of Americans and host country nationals who attend international/overseas schools (see the references for examples, of which there are many), research began to appear which attempted to characterize the rest of the student population in these schools.

Referred to in the literature with the disparaging term 'third-culture kids,' these students have had to carry around an unfortunate set of academic baggage. By using this term researchers have implicitly tagged them as somehow deficient, as 'not whole,' as 'incomplete,' or as 'neither/nor.' Much of the research signals this direction, yet it is my position that the authors who have supported this conceptual interpretation have approached their subjects with ethnocentric blinders. There have been no longitudinal studies, for example, that have followed up these people. It is notable, too, that none of the researchers to my knowledge has actually belonged to the category of 'third-culture kid,' but have instead been sojourner school administrators or university professors, usually American.

There has been little consideration as to whether the so-called 'third-culture kids' may in fact be a new and different category of individual. What we are now witnessing in international schools and other contexts where multi-cultural socialization takes place may be a an important transformation. What has been most fascinating to observe in the present research has been the extent to which these students have themselves seized the high ground of defining who they are and where they are going.

Students who were formerly given the impression of being in cultural limbo-land (neither here nor there) and who were told of their own marginality, are now discounting this stereotype and its stigma. Instead, they are proclaiming by their actions an individuality and identity as citizens of the world. The era when students were told of the superiority of their national system but cut off from it, while also being told of the inferiority of the host country, but being immersed in it, appears to be over.

Considerable literature has documented the problems of these so-called 'third-culture kids (TCK's)," a term which I believe should be rejected because of its pejorative connotations. The concept originated with Useem (1963, 1976; later research was done by Downs (1974); Downie (1976); Hager (1978), Wright (1979) and others) as a label for children who spend the majority of their schooling in a country other than the one of their citizenship. Some of the research cited by these authors indicates that TCK's perceive themselves as adaptable rather than rootless and have aspirations toward internationally-oriented careers,

but in the main TCK's are portrayed as never really becoming a part of any culture, neither the one they live in nor the one they are from.

This simplistic approach to a large group of individuals neglects the enormous range of responses, both from parents and children, that can occur to international living. A priori conceptual biases have again skewed the authors' research. Far better to examine all students in international schools for both positive and negative features, rather than focus on the negative aspects alone. The terms international school child' or 'international child' as conceptual categories are an improvement on TCK's. International schools create an ethos which socializes their members to an experience which is in effect the creation of a new world view. There are both cognitive and affective dimensions to this socialization.

The members of the international school community are primarily members of a business elite, an international upper-middle and upper class. Children in international schools have already had a good dose of upward mobility from their parents before they even enter the school. In the school the contest for elite status is less apparent because of the class homogeneity of the students, but its theme is nevertheless always there in the background.

For students, the purpose of international schooling is generated from pressure, pressure from three different directions: family, school, and peers. Joining into the life of such a school is in some ways a psychic gauntlet through which one must pass. Rites of passage exist in the setting of the international school just as they do in any society.

What holds the class of internationally-oriented people together is not only mobility, but the shared beliefs and shared lives which these rites of passage symbolize. A sense of collective identity, however, does not develop naturally but is forged out of actual encounters. Sociologists have noted for us in this context the importance of repetitive encounters in terms of socialization. Rather than just trying to place individuals as members of certain groups, we should look for a set of influences which may explain how each individual behaves, what will make him/her associate with others in particular ways.

One consequence is similar to what happens in any school but there are ways in which this becomes more intense, too: the usual adolescent behavior of seeking peer group support and approval is heightened by a conciousness of the international setting. Friendships in international schools are deep and lasting, carrying over well into adult life despite the separation of time and distance. The network of affiliation that develops during an international school experience is both strong and durable. The forging of a collective identity based on a multicultural experience is an important object of the present study.

Part of the rite of passage in an international school is ascribed to teachers and at least from the students point of view it involves a certain amount of pain, the idea being that without pain there can be no toughening transformation of character, no preparation for the rough and tumble competition of adult society.

Three important themes became clear as my first year of teaching in an international school wound to a close, themes that would also be apparent in other international schools in which I would later teach. Because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds international school students...

a) operate at the edge of cross-cultural contact

b) are considered outsiders to any one national culture, at least insofar as traditional cultures have ethnocentrically defined themselves, as separate from outsiders

c) assume mobility as a given - in space, personality, and cultural precepts

Whether these students are a product of their family background, their peer groups, or the international school is a moot point - their identities were of course forged through a combination of all three. What is important for the present study is that the international school provides a setting in which the identities of international students can be given shape and substance as well as a chance to assert a refreshing international 'ethos' in a world preoccupied with nationalism.

At a time of increasing interdependence and multicultural communication these students seem to me to be one step ahead of the rest of us, but their lives can also be lonely and difficult. Some of them become signal successes while others drift endlessly, always yearning for the 'home-base' they never had. Maybe this 'home-base' is mythical for all of us anyway. Thomas Wolfe, in his poignant statement that we can never go home again, makes us wonder of course if this home base ever really existed anyway.

While the pressure for utilizing a national curriculum (notably American) has been overwhelming in international schools, this now appears to have been more utilitarian than ideological. Indications are that new criteria for learning and evaluation are being adopted, often blended with traditional American models. Although students' academic goals have historically been North American universities, a growing number are opting for either international-type universities or tertiary institutions located in the host country or in Europe. Those who attend American universities find their lives inexorably changed by their experience in international schools and cosmopolitan settings. Their

future is often tied in some way to an international life, too. Those who choose to work after high school rather than attend university also find themselves in jobs with a cross-cultural character. Instead of viewing students in international schools as deprived, then, whatever their background, might it not make more sense ask what the view is from the stakeholders' position? If we do this, we note that privilege and an appropriate educational path are two hallmark features.

As the number of North American students declined in the late 1970s with economic retrenchment and changing tax laws, so did the financial support of the American government for all schooling. In its stead is an organization of privilege and power, the multinational corporation. These corporations formerly depended almost exclusively on American employees. Increasingly they are using host nationals or professional managers from any cultural background. What is particularly noticeable is the extent to which these managers share a common 'international' culture. For the mobile children of these professional managers a demanding and replicable curriculum is very important.

Rising pressures to internationalize even further may highlight international schools as models of a global education. One of the most curious aspects of these schools, and potentially the most productive, is what McPherson (1982) views as a blend of public school assumptions applied to privately run schools. The American desire for equity in education is at least partly spoken for by the openness of these schools in their admissions policies to all interested students and their efforts to educate anyone who can pay the tuition, while the absence of governmental control and lack of a government-based financial support system is more in keeping with American private schools. This blend of democratic purpose and committment, in combination with the independence and financial characteristics of private schools, presents international schools as unique institutions.

Some Preliminary Research Results Concerning International School Students at Columbia Academy

The Rokeach Value Survey (Milton Rokeach, The Nature of Human Values, 1973; Halgren Tests, Sunnyvale, Calif., 1967) is a well-known standardized instrument for measuring two sets of values, one instrumental and the other terminal. This survey has been widely-used in many contexts and thus provides us with interesting statistical comparisons. In addition to using the Rokeach Value Survey, the author constructed a 37-item questionnaire for the purpose of elicting information regarding age, sex, nationality, birth place, length of residence overseas, parents' occupations, types of schools attended, religion, language, future job choice (dream and pragmatic), and opinions regarding the purpose of education, friends, college plans, marriage, success, etc. Structured interviewing was also carried out

1983-1985. The framework for observations and interpretation was educational ethnography.

As was mentioned above, the study population consisted of 215 high school students of Columbia Academy (C.A.), an international school in Kobe, Japan. The research was carried out during the 1981-1985 school years. A questionaire of 37 items and the Rokeach Value Survey were given to students in all social science classes in Grades 9-12 during this year. In a setting like C.A., value orientations may be influenced by certain demographic considerations. These were reported on the questionnaire. The analysis consisted of frequency and cross-tabulation tables to summarize and compare character variables.

The preliminary results of the research raise some intriguing questions and establish certain descriptive parameters for the international school student. C.A. is diverse: a breakdown by nationalities reveals the student body to be from 37 countries. At least as far as nationality is concerned there is good reason for calling the school international. These diverse subpopulations need also be considered in light of their birth-place and length of residence in the host country. Another demographic consideration is that the school is populated more by females than males. Further diversity can be seen in religion and language. The class background of the students indicated them to come from families that are almost exclusively well-to-do and/or highly educated. Ethnic background of friends by nationality shows a marked preference for those from many countries, except for a core group of Japanese whose friends are other Japanese (and a similar, smaller group of Americans). Other descriptive parameters of the school population include where students attended elementary, middle and high school, the choice of college plans, future job and future choice of where to live.

When value orientations were examined there were some surprises. When the students were asked 'Which of the following ways of life best suit you?' (with possible answers being 'work hard, getting rich,' 'study hard,' 'live according to my own interests,' 'take it easy ,' 'work for the good of others') it was thought that differences according to nationality might appear, but instead the statistical analysis showed no significance ($p>0.8$). For the questions 'What makes your life worth living?' ($p>0.4$) and 'What do you consider important to succeed in this world?' ($p>0.2$) there were no significant statistical differences between nationalities.

Statistical correlations were found, however, between nationality and religion on the question "What qualities are most important to you in marriage? It is clear that 'attitude of equality towards me' was more important to the Europeans, Americans, and binationals than to the Japanese. Americans were most concerned with maturity, while the Japanese said responsibility. When the question of marriage was

correlated with religion, significance was found between Protestants (responsibility was first), Catholics (equality), and those who stated None (equality). These results seem to indicate that in a sphere as private and important as marriage, socialization is not affected by the school environment.

However, many of the other questions which I expected would correlate with nationality did not, indicating perhaps that peer relationships play a more important role in socialization in a multicultural setting than nationality. This also seems to be indicated by the strong responses aroused in students whenever the topic of friendship was brought up, either on a questionnaire or during an interview. In examining the results from the Rokeach Value Survey, significant differences were noted between nationalities on values such as capable (a high value for minority groups, low for Japanese), self-controlled (high for Japanese, low for Americans), sense of accomplishment (higher for binationals and Americans, low for Europeans), pleasure (high for binationals, low for Americans and Indians), salvation (high for Koreans, low for binationals), and self-respect (high for Americans, low for Koreans). Some correlations by religion or father's job also appeared using the Rokeach Survey. But, interestingly, there are many values which do not correlate significantly with these or with nationality. Instead, it might be relevant to ask how these students compare with similar high school populations in a national setting. A U.S. high school sample shows important differences with the students in an international school. International school students rankeed the following instrumental and terminal values considerably higher than U.S. high school students: cheerful, imaginative, independent, logical, loving, self-controlled; an exciting life, inner harmony, pleasure, social recognition, and true friendship. Americans, compared to international school students, ranked these values more highly: ambitious, capable, clean, forgiving; a sense of accomplishment, equality, family security, national security, salvation and self-respect.

The data described in this working paper help to clarify the nature of the international school. The results have implications for American schooling as we enter an age of global interdependence, implications with relevance for policy makers, curriculum directors, educational psychologists, sociologists, teachers, and administrators. At its best, an international education will give students a deep understanding of the country in which they live. In addition, an understanding of a foreign culture will often bring about a deep re-examination of one's own nationality, thereby strengthening an identification with one's own country in a way most compatriots at home will not experience. In a world of tension and misunderstandings those people with an international education bring important insights and hope for the future to the rest of us.

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